

Fact Sheet on Early Processing of Ballots for 6/14/2022 Primary Election Pursuant to Title 21-A Section 760-B

1. **Optional procedure:** Note: Pursuant to Title 21-A M.R.S., §760-B 1st ¶, clerks may opt to process absentee ballots beginning on the 7th day immediately prior to election day.
 - The Municipal Clerk may opt to process absentee ballots **Tuesday (6/7), Wednesday (6/8), Thursday (6/9), Friday (6/10), Saturday (6/11), Sunday (6/12), and/or Monday (6/13)** prior to Election Day (6/14).

2. **Time limits on processing**
 - Processing can occur between 9 am and 9 pm on any of the 7 days (**June 7 – June 13**) prior to Election Day, unless an inspection is requested (see section 4). If an inspection is requested, the inspection period would be 9 am to 10 am and processing may not begin until after 10 am.
 - The Municipal Clerk designates the time for processing to begin.

3. **Notice requirements**
 - The Municipal Clerk must complete the Notice of Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day to designate 1 hour for inspection and designate the time for early processing to start after the inspection period. If no inspection is requested, the Clerk may begin processing at 9 am (or at a chosen time after 9 am), by designating Time Processing Begins as “9 am, or immediately following a requested inspection”.

 - The Municipal Clerk must give notice at least 30 days before Election Day (**by 5 pm on May 16, 2022**) by:
 - mailing a copy of the Notice of Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day to the Municipal Party Chairs (D, G, L and R) at their last known addresses; or by mailing a copy of the Notice of Election to the State Party Chairs (if no municipal chairs); **and**
 - providing a copy of the Notice to the Division of Elections by one of these methods
 1. Email a scanned attachment (cec.officials@maine.gov)
 2. Fax (287-6545 or 287-5428)
 3. Mail (101 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333)

Note: If a copy of the Notice of Election is not received by the Division of Elections by **May 16, 2022**, the municipality **may not** process absentees prior to the election.

4. **Inspection before Processing**
 - A member of the public who wishes to inspect absentee materials must make a written request to the Clerk **by 9 am on each day that the clerk intends to process absentee ballots prior to Election Day**, to inspect the absentee applications/envelopes before they are processed.
 - The Municipal Clerk must allow **1 hour** for inspection before processing (e.g. 9 am to 10 am).
 - The Municipal Clerk may start processing immediately after the inspection period has elapsed, or at the time designated on the Notice of Election, if later.

5. **Ballot Processing and Other Procedures**
 - The Municipal Clerk follows absentee ballot processing procedures in Title 21-A §759, §760-A.
 - The procedures for handling full ballot boxes (optical scan only), pollwatching and challenging ballots are conducted in the same manner as on Election Day.

6. **Counting and Results Prohibited before the Close of the Polls on Election Day**
 - Ballots **may not** be counted, voter intent **may not** be determined and election results **may not** be obtained or released until after the polls close on Election Day (and after all in-person voters have voted and all absentee ballots have been processed).

7. **Security of Processed Ballots and Tabulating Equipment**

At the conclusion of early absentee ballot processing, the Municipal Clerk shall ensure:

 - the processed absentee ballots are locked and sealed in tamper-proof containers, as required by the “Uniform Guidelines for Securing Ballots and Other Materials”; and
 - these locked and sealed containers must be further secured in a vault or other locked, secure location until ballots are counted after the polls close on Election Day.

Instructions for Completing Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day Notice

Prepared by the Office of the Secretary of State, March 2022

The *Notice of Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day* provided in this mailing is **only for the purpose of notifying the Secretary of State and political parties of the municipality's intent to process absentee ballots prior to Election Day**. If a Municipal Clerk is not opting to process absentee ballots early on any of the days allowed, this Notice does not need to be completed or filed with the political parties or Secretary of State.

Early Processing Day Option(s)	Date Option(s)
Tuesday	June 7, 2022
Wednesday	June 8, 2022
Thursday	June 9, 2022
Friday	June 10, 2022
Saturday	June 11, 2022
Sunday	June 12, 2022
Monday	June 13, 2022

The steps for completing the Notice are as follows:

1. **Complete the municipality name**
2. **Complete the date(s) and time(s) of Early Processing**
3. **Provide an attested copy** of the completed *Notice of Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day* to the Secretary of State (Division of Elections) and the municipal chair of each political party **at least 30 days before Election Day (by May 16, 2022)**. Notice to the political parties must be mailed to the last address of each municipal chair known to the Clerk. If there is no municipal chair, the notice must be mailed to the state party chair of each party. Contact information for the state party chairs is provided in this mailing and posted on the Elections Temp page.

Note: *A Clerk intending to process absentee ballots before Election Day must read and comply with the Uniform Guidelines for Securing Ballots and Other Materials. The clerk must confirm this fact and initial the Notice of Intent to Process Absentee Ballots Prior to Election Day where indicated. A copy of the Uniform Guidelines is posted on the temp site.*

Clerks intending to process absentee ballots only on Election Day before the polls have closed or process only on Election Day after the polls have closed should not complete the Notice provided in this mailing. These Clerks will need to complete only the actual Notice of Election (to be provided in a future mailing).